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13 January 1970

**MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR**

Subj: Watch Committee Consideration of the Arab-Israeli Crisis

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1. **Problem:** To coordinate the analysis and reporting of intelligence of indications significance concerning the Middle East in the context of a direct US-Soviet military confrontation.

2. **Background:** It is generally accepted that the Arab-Israeli crisis presents the greatest danger of a direct US-Soviet military confrontation within the foreseeable future. Analysis and reporting of intelligence on the situation in the Middle East is currently undertaken by the various intelligence agencies with relatively little coordination, excepting an aperiodical SNIE or NIE. Further, there is no recent intelligence publication which has specifically addressed the Arab-Israeli crisis in the context of a direct US-Soviet military confrontation. Significantly, the Watch Committee has repeatedly rejected all attempts to restate the nature of the crisis in terms related to the issue of primary concern--Soviet intentions to initiate hostilities against the United States. (While it is recognized that the Arab-Israeli crisis per se is not within the Watch Committee's terms of reference, the Chairman of the USIB has directed that the Watch Committee consider the situation in the Middle East on a continuing basis for indications of Soviet intentions.)

3. **Recommendations:** To overcome the above deficiencies in indications analysis and reporting and to provide appropriate textual comment in the Watch Report, the following recommendations are forwarded for your consideration:

a. The Watch Committee establish an ad hoc working group specifically tasked to examine the Middle East situation on a continuing basis to provide the earliest possible warning of Soviet intentions to initiate hostilities against the United States. This working group should consist of at least one representative each from CIA, DIA, State, and NIC. The areas of analysis should include, but not be limited to, the following:

- (1) Soviet attitudes toward two-and-four-power talks.
- (2) Soviet attitudes toward the Arab countries, the fedayeen, Israel, and the Middle East situation in general.
- (3) Soviet military and economic aid to the Arab countries and the fedayeen.
- (4) Intra-Arab political and military cooperation.
- (5) Arab-Israeli hostilities.
- (6) Soviet military presence in the Middle East and the Mediterranean.

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b. The ad hoc working group should meet as often as deemed necessary by its members, but no less often than once a month.

c. The ad hoc working group would submit monthly for Watch Committee consideration and approval a brief paper discussing trends of indications significance in the Middle East situation. The conclusions in this paper would be included in the Watch Report in lieu of the present textual comment.

d. Delete the present Arab-Israeli commentary from the Watch Report. It is intended that, unless developments warrant, only the conclusions contained in the ad hoc working group monthly report would appear in the Watch Report.

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